

Room for Christmas

A children's Christmas musical
for unison/two-part voices, piano and flute

by
Mark Burrows

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Foreword

I was so excited when Choristers Guild asked me to write a Christmas musical. Then it hit me – *How in the world am I going to write a Christmas musical?!* There are already so many Christmas musicals out there. How can I possibly offer a fresh take on such a beloved story that everyone knows?

In *Room for Christmas*, it's one week before the church Christmas pageant. The director is sick and it's up to the children to do the best they can...but it won't be easy. No one has learned their lines.

The pageant feels like “just one more thing” during a busy time of year.
Everyone has their own opinions about how to make this old story feel brand new.
A bossy angel.
Wisecracking shepherds.
Unruly sheep.

Will the children get it together in time? Will the Christmas pageant be a complete flop? Or will the children discover, in their own unabashedly child-like ways, the joy and wonder that comes from making room for what really matters?

Mark Burrows

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The Cast of Characters

Most roles can be played by either male or female performers.

The roles are listed in order from most lines to fewest.

ANGEL – bossy, large-and-in-charge, very focused on the details. Tries to make sure everything is just right. Ideally should be played by an older child or even a youth. Has a solo in *Brand New Feeling*.

NARRATOR – a strong speaker with the ability to memorize a few longer lines

WISE MAN 3 – thoughtful, focused on outreach

INNKEEPER – earnest, the one most likely to be in the Christmas spirit all year. Has a solo in *Room in My Heart*.

SHEEP 2 – a class-clown type

JOSEPH – fairly straight-ahead role

MARY – quietly mature, probably the closest to type for a Christmas pageant

WISE MAN 1 – a know-it-all, the budding theologian of the group

SHEEP 1 – the one most willing (and likely) to speak out

SHEPHERD 1 – kind, tries to be helpful

SHEEP 3 – only says “Baa.” Needs a performer who can give a good, dry delivery.

SHEPHERD 2 – kind, but a little less focused than SHEPHERD 1

WISE MAN 2 – the most practical of the Wise Men

Casting Options

Let’s say you have a bunch of children – more who want parts than there are parts written. No problem. Here are some things you can do:

- NARRATOR can be divided into several smaller parts.
- SHEPHERD 1 and SHEPHERD 2 can be divided into 4 total roles.
- SHEEP 1 can be divided into SHEEP 1 and SHEEP 4 (since you already have 2 and 3).
- Consider that some children may want a singing role but not a speaking role. Create additional SOLOIST characters for these children. There are many opportunities for singing solos, most of which can be sung by any member of the cast.

On the flip side, if you have a smaller group you may need to condense a few roles.

- SHEPHERD 1 and SHEPHERD 2 can be combined into one role.
- SHEEP 1 and SHEEP 2 can deliver all of SHEEP 3’s lines in unison.
- The NARRATOR could even double as WISE MAN 2 or WISE MAN 3.

Costumes

In Scene One (The Rehearsal) keep attire basic. Black/dark pants, solid color shirts. For Scene Two (The Christmas Pageant) add *simple* pageant costume items to give the feel of the bible figures, such as -

ANGEL – wings, halo

SHEPHERDS – tunics, headpiece

WISE MEN – crowns, robes

SHEEP – headbands with fluffy white ears, fluffy pin-on tails

INNKEEPER – tunic

JOSEPH – tunic, but no headpiece

MARY – tunic and headpiece (different color than the Shepherds')

NARRATOR – same basic attire

Props

Very few props are required, most are optional, and all are typical Christmas Pageant variety – a baby doll for MARY, shepherds' crooks for the SHEPHERDS.

Set

As with the costumes and props, keep it simple. A manger in the center is the only essential set piece. Everything else, such as an actual stable, inn, or starry sky, is completely optional. If you have risers or other small platforms, utilize them to allow children who are upstage (further back) to be seen better.

The Songs

Running Out of Room – The opening number. As the music begins, children rush in from various places, giving the effect of children gathering for rehearsal. There is an optional solo at the beginning which may be sung center stage as the other children enter. There are two additional optional solos which may be sung by individuals or by the entire cast. The whole mood needs to feel busy, even frenzied.

What Do We Do With Christmas? – The children are struggling with how to take an old story everyone already knows, and make it feel new and exciting. The children need to portray both the excitement of new ideas for the pageant and the eye-rolling boredom of having to do the pageant the "same old way." Optional *divisi*.

We Are the Sheep – A short song just for the SHEEP, based on "Up on the Housetop." This is their big moment and they plan to make the most of it. A few very simple movement suggestions are provided in the score, but the flashier the better! While the SHEEP take center stage, the others can move back or to the sides.

Note: While most of the cast in this scene is not in their pageant costumes yet, it will be good for the Sheep to wear their tails. There is a point in the song where the Sheep wagging their tails could make a funny visual. Plus, it's one less thing the Sheep have to do during the scene change.

There Was Love – The ballad of the show. It starts off with an optional solo, and ideally this should be sung by MARY who had the last line leading into the song. In

fact, you might cue the music just as MARY starts her line, “But Christmas isn’t something you make. Christmas is something that is.” In the middle of the song, a speaker recites a reading based on John 1:1-5. (Another casting opportunity?) The speaker should come forward to recite this.

Interlude (What Do We Do) – Scene change music. The music only lasts a little over one minute. It isn’t much time; but then again, you don’t want (and the congregation doesn’t want) the scene change to last any longer than absolutely necessary. There are many places in the score to repeat sections if the transition takes longer than expected. Make sure the pianist and flute player are attentive and ready to vamp as needed.

Note: During the scene change, the children put on their Christmas pageant costumes, gather any props, and help with any set pieces. It is highly recommended that a few parents be on hand to help with this so the transition goes as smoothly as possible. It is also highly recommended that you allow ample rehearsal time to practice this transition rather than waiting until the day of the musical.

Room in My Heart – A show-stopper moment. INNKEEPER takes center stage and sings the first verse as a solo. The other cast members join on the second verse. Perhaps ANGEL hesitates at first, feeling that things are going wrong, only to get swept up in the moment. Optional *divisi*.

In the Bleak Midwinter – The song during which the Bringing of the Toys occurs. The cast should have their toys waiting at the sides of the stage area and can be the first to bring their toys to the manger (then return to their places on stage). A few strategically-placed ushers or parents should facilitate the congregational participation, inviting people forward to offer their toys. Invite the congregation to join in singing the final verse. The words should be printed in the programs or posted somewhere easily visible. Optional solo in verse two.

Brand New Feeling – An up-tempo closing song. ANGEL begins the piece with a solo. The rest of the cast joins at the chorus.

The Toy Drive

One of the features of *Room for Christmas* is the inclusion of a gently-used toy drive as a part of the story. A toy drive provides a real, concrete way for the children to experience making room. It will offer the congregation an opportunity to be active participants in the musical. And it will give your entire faith community a shared

project which reaches out beyond the walls of the church.

Communicating the information is very important. Let everyone know about the toy drive in the weeks leading up to the musical. Advertise it in the bulletin. Announce it in the worship space and in Sunday school classes. Send notes home with children. Use e-mail, posters, social media, and any means you can to get the word out. The most meaningful, wonderful visual you can create for this musical production is a huge pile of toys, soon to bring joy to children in need.

A few thoughts about gently-used toys:

- Make sure a child who donates a gently-used toy is involved in the decision-making process. Saying goodbye to an old toy can be harder for children than we might think.
- While many organizations accept gently-used toys, few (if any) have the ability and means to repair broken or damaged toys. Keep in mind the “gently” part of *gently-used* toys. Before you donate, make sure all parts are in working order and that toys aren’t missing pieces.
- Cleaning the toy before donating can be a huge help. Organizations which accept gently-used toys often rely heavily on hardworking volunteers. By cleaning the toy and making it look as new as possible, you are not only showing respect for the child who will receive it, but for those volunteers whose job it is to get the toys in the children’s hands.
- Some organizations cannot accept used stuffed animals due to possible germ concerns. Plan ahead. Be sure you know the donation guidelines for your intended donation site.
- Some of the many organizations that may accept gently-used toys include: family shelters, missions, daycares, preschools, counseling centers, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, YWCA, Red Cross, The Salvation Army, social services. Check in your area.

Room for Christmas

SCENE 1: The Rehearsal

*A rehearsal space. It could have the feel of a choir room, Sunday school classroom, or the worship space. A makeshift manger is at center. Various Christmas pageant costumes and props are strewn across the area. During **Running Out of Room**, the children gather on stage. They seem to be rushing in from all directions.*

Running Out of Room

Mark Burrows

Mark Burrows

Frenzied (♩ = 120)

Piano

(OPTIONAL SOLOIST)

mf

5

There is - n't an - y time for

8

laugh - ter, there is - n't an - y time for cheer. There's

11

traf-fic at the mall, the worst I can re-call. This is the most fre-ne-tic time of

14

(CHOIR) *f*

year. We're run-ning out of room for Christ-mas, There's

17

on-ly eight more shop-ping days to go. We're bu-sy buy-ing stuff. Will it

20

ev-er be e-nough? This whole sea-son has us run-ning to and fro. We're

35 (OPTIONAL SOLOIST)

share a piece of pump - kin pie? With end-less shop-ping lists, who

38 (CHOIR) *f*

knows what all we've missed? So man-y ti-ny trin-kets yet to buy. We're

41

run-ning out of room for Christ-mas. There's on-ly eight more shop-ping days to

44

go. We're bu-sy buy-ing stuff. Will it ev-er be e-nough?

59

put-ting on a Christ - mas pag - eant, — but it is - n't an - y

mf

62

fun. Our minds are o - ver - bur - dened

65

with the mil-lion lit-tle er - rands left to run.

cresc.

68

f

We're run-ning out of room for Christ - mas. — There's

f

71

on-ly eight more shop-ping days to go. We're bu-sy buy-ing stuff. Will it

74

ev-er be e-nough? This whole sea-son has us run-ning to and fro. We're

77

run-ning out of room for Christ - mas. So man-y dif-f'rent par-ties to at-

80

tend. We're run-ning out of room for Christ - mas. When

What Do We Do With Christmas?

Mark Burrows

Mark Burrows

Swing! $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$ ($\text{♩} = 124$)

Flute* *f*

Piano *f*

4

3

CHOIR *f*

How do we tell__ an old, old

7

sto - ry that's been told so much be - fore?__ How do we make__

*A reproducible flute part is printed on pages 59-60.

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CGC61

10

— it sound ex - cit - ing? Can we give it some - thing more?_

13

— We know the car - ols, know the rhymes. We've heard it all_

16

— a mil - lion times. What do we do to make it

19

feel like new? What do we do with

30

— to make it bet - ter; fill the crowd with "oohs" and "ahs"?_

33

— We know the car - ols, know the rhymes. We've heard it all_

36

— a mil - lion times. What do we do to make it

48

what our friends will say.

51

Amp it up with rock guitars. When we're done we'll

54

all be stars. Got-ta give some new life to this

66

Part I

3

What do we do with Christ - mas? _____

Part II (optional)

3

What do we do How do we tell _____ an old, old

mf

69

Christ - mas? What do we do with Christ - mas? _____

sto - ry? What do we do How do we tell _____

SHEEP 1: At least we know *our* part.

ANGEL: But you're stepping on my big moment.

SHEEP 1: The sheep only get one line.

SHEEP 2: Yeah. What about *our* big moment?

SHEEP 3: (*defiantly*) Baa!

ANGEL: But...you're *sheep*.

SHEEP 1: Well, *these* sheep want their moment in the spotlight.

SHEEP 3: Baa!

We Are the Sheep

Mark Burrows

UP ON THE HOUSE TOP
Benjamin Hanby, 1833-1867
arr. Mark Burrows

Swing! $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$ (♩ = 120)

Piano *f*

The piano introduction is in 4/4 time, key of D major (two sharps). It features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The melody starts with a quarter note D, followed by eighth notes E, F#, G, A, B, C, D. The bass line consists of a series of chords: D2, F#2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4.

4 SHEEP *f*

Up on the stage, here come the sheep.

The vocal line for the sheep starts at measure 4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same melody and bass line as the introduction.

7 Watch us boo-gie, watch us leap. We make the most of

The vocal line continues at measure 7. The piano accompaniment continues with the same melody and bass line.

22

clap clap] Baa. [stomp stomp pat pat clap clap] Baa.

25

Up on the stage we steal the show. Look out shep - herds,

28 (wag tails)

watch us

31

go. _____ Baa!

(raise arms, turn around)

SHEPHERD 1: Our pageant doesn't have to be just like the Bible story.

ANGEL: Yes it does! That's what people *expect*. It has to be just right so we can...make it feel like Christmas.

MARY: But Christmas isn't something you make. Christmas is something that *is*.

There Was Love

Mark Burrows

Incorporating *MUELLER*
James R. Murray (1841-1905)
Mark Burrows

With awe (♩ = 98)

Flute* *p*

Piano *p*

6

(OPTIONAL SOLOIST) *p*

Be - fore there were shep-herds out

11

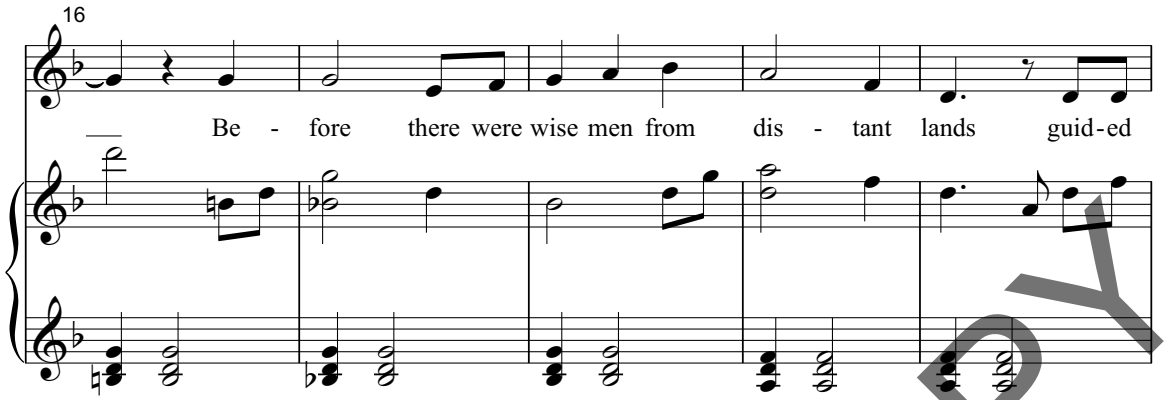
in the field keep-ing watch o - ver flocks by night.

*A reproducible flute part is printed on pages 61-62.

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16

Be - fore there were wise men from dis - tant lands guid-ed

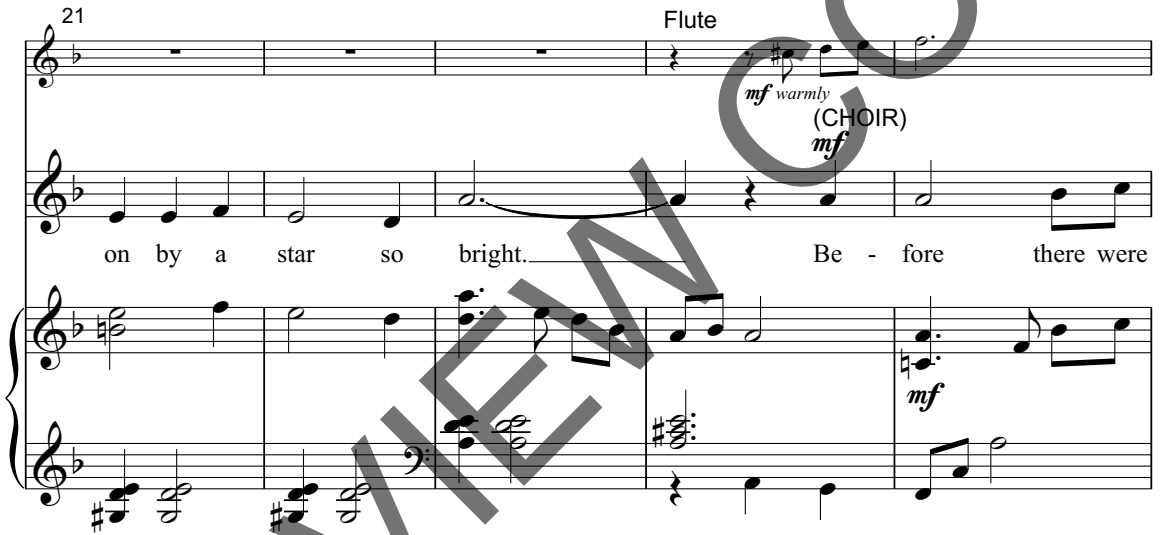


21

Flute

mf warmly (CHOIR) *mf*

on by a star so bright. Be - fore there were



26

an - gels to sing the song, one Voice was sing - ing



46

mp
a tempo
a tempo

fore there were pre - sents or Christ - mas trees dec-o - ra - ted in

a tempo
mp

51

red and green. Be - fore there were pag - eants with

56

parts to play re-cre - at - ing a man - ger scene.

76

there was Life, there was Love.

dim.

81

p
p
Ooh

85

READER: * In the beginning, before anything had ever been made, he was there with God.

Ooh

*The spoken part does not need to align exactly with the music. It is much more important that the text come across naturally.

101

I, or the stars in the sky, there was Light,

105

there was Life, there was Love.

p

109

rit.

rit.

p

ANGEL: Well, it looks like we've run out of time for practice. Everyone please try to study your lines this week.

WISE MAN 3: And?

ANGEL: (*Sighs.*) And don't forget to bring a toy from home for the toy drive.

(*Everyone exits.*)

Interlude (What Do We Do)

Mark Burrows

Mark Burrows

(During the **Interlude**, characters put on Christmas pageant costumes. Any additional set pieces needed for Scene Two are put in place. These can be a makeshift stable, a backdrop with stars, a door to the inn, etc. But honestly, less is more!)

Swing! $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$ (♩ = 124)

Flute*

Piano

mf

mf

4

3

7

3

*A reproducible flute part is printed on page 63.

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SCENE 2: The Christmas Pageant

The day/evening of the Christmas pageant. The cast is in costume, and the stage is set.

ANGEL: The big day is here! Places everyone!

SHEPHERD 2: Look at all those people out there.

SHEEP 2: *(waving)* Hi, Mom!

JOSEPH: I wish I'd practiced more.

ANGEL: It's too late for that now. Just do the best you can. Okay, Narrator.

NARRATOR: Ahem. In those days the emperor Caesar...*(trying to remember)*...Caesar...Augustus (a proud pause) made a decree that everyone in the empire should be counted. This meant that people had to go to their hometowns to register. Joseph had to go to the town of his ancestors, Bethlehem. He was engaged to Mary, who was expecting a baby.

(MARY and JOSEPH enter and cross to inn. INNKEEPER enters.)

NARRATOR: When they arrived in Bethlehem, they found an inn.

JOSEPH: I am Joseph, and this is Mary. She is expecting a baby.

MARY: We have traveled a long way. Please, do you have any room for us?

(INNKEEPER, clearly not wanting to say line, has his/her mouth clamped shut and is shaking head "no.")

ANGEL: *(to INNKEEPER)* Just say your line.

(All the others are peeking over at INNKEEPER, nervous that he/she won't say the line.)

INNKEEPER: *(reluctantly)* I'm sorry. There is no room in the inn.

ALL: *(relieved)* Whew!

INNKEEPER: But...*(walks to center stage)*

ANGEL: Uh-oh.

INNKEEPER: There will always be room for you IN MY HEART! *(looks over to accompanist)* Hit it!

Room in My Heart

Mark Burrows

Mark Burrows

Swing! $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$ ($\text{♩} = 120$)
Gospel feel

Piano *f*

1st time: INNKEEPER
2nd time: CHOIR

f

1. I'm mak-ing room in my heart for
2. I'm mak-ing room in my heart for

love. I'm mak-ing room in my heart for love. I'm mak-ing
peace. I'm mak-ing room in my heart for peace. I'm mak-ing

18

I

Part II (optional)

II

Room, room, room for the ba-by. Room, room,

21

Part I

I

3. I'm mak-ing room in my heart for joy. I'm mak-ing

II

room for the ba-by. Room, room, room for the ba-by.

24

I

room in my heart for joy.— I'm mak-ing room in my heart for

II

Room, room, room for the ba-by. Room, room,

NARRATOR: So, um...after the song, Mary and Joseph found a stable. And this is where the baby was born. Mary wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.

(SHEPHERDS and SHEEP enter.)

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, there were shepherds in the fields, keeping watch over their quiet sheep by night.

SHEEP 1, 2, and 3: *(softly)* Baa. *(SHEEP continue "baa"-ing very softly so the following dialogue can be easily heard.)*

NARRATOR: An angel appeared to them and said...

(ANGEL looks straight ahead at all the people, realizes this is her/his big moment, and completely freezes up.)

NARRATOR: And the angel said...

(ANGEL still frozen.)

SHEPHERD 1: *(to ANGEL)* Fear not.

ANGEL: *(to SHEPHERD 1)* I know that part, but I can't remember what comes after it.

SHEPHERD 1: No, I mean *fear not*. Your friends are with you. You can do it.

ALL: *(words of support for ANGEL – "Yeah," "You can do it," "We're here for you," etc.)*

ANGEL: *(tentatively)* Fear not. *(takes deep breath and says with more assurance)* Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy. *(gathering confidence with every word)* For to you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, Christ the Lord. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. *(sigh of relief)*

SHEPHERD 2: *(to ANGEL)* Way to go.

SHEEP 3: *(softly)* Baa.

NARRATOR: The shepherds and sheep hurried all the way to Bethlehem. There they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby.

(SHEPHERDS and SHEEP go to manger scene and stand to the side.)

In the Bleak Midwinter

Christina G. Rossetti (1830-1894)

CRANHAM
Gustav Holst (1874-1939)
arr. Mark Burrows

♩ = 92

Flute* *mp*

Piano *mp*

5

CHOIR *mp*

In the bleak mid - win - ter,

9

frost - y wind made moan, earth stood hard as i - ron,

*A reproducible flute part is printed on page 64.

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13

wa - ter like a stone; snow had fal - len, snow on snow,

17

snow on snow; in the bleak mid - win - ter,

21

long a - go.

37 *mf*

ficed _____ the Lord _____ God Al - might - y,

mf

40

cresc.

Je - sus Christ.

cresc.

43 **Broadly**

slight rit. *f*

(Congregation may join)

slight rit. *f*

What _____ can I

Broadly

slight rit. *f*

46

give him, poor as I am?

49

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a

52

lamb. If I were a wise man,

Brand New Feeling

Mark Burrows

Mark Burrows

Lively (♩ = 120)

Piano *mf*

4

ANGEL *mf*

There's some - thing warm and won - der - ful

7

now I feel it in my heart. — It's like the

CHOIR

f

22

The most a - maz - ing feel - ing of

25

all, it does - n't cost a thing. And when we

28

give it room to grow, the whole world starts to sing. It's

31

more than laugh - ter, more than love, it's more than the won - der of the

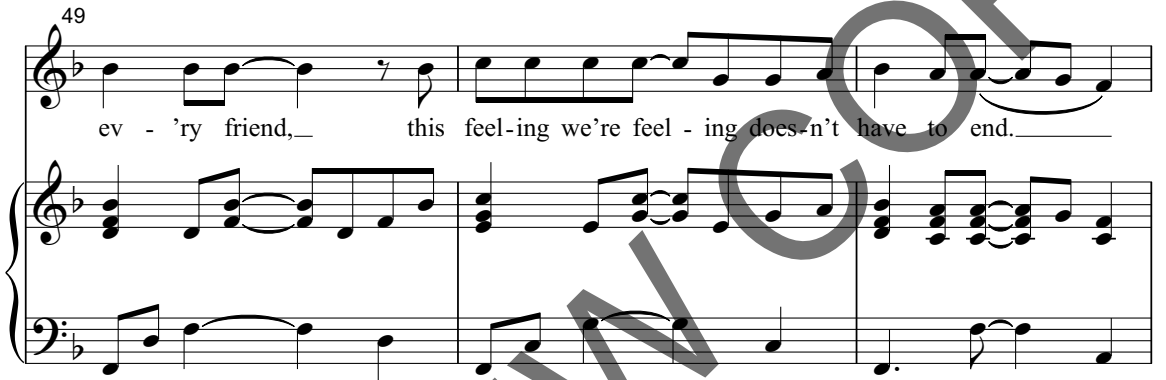
46

long. Tell ev - 'ry neigh - bor,



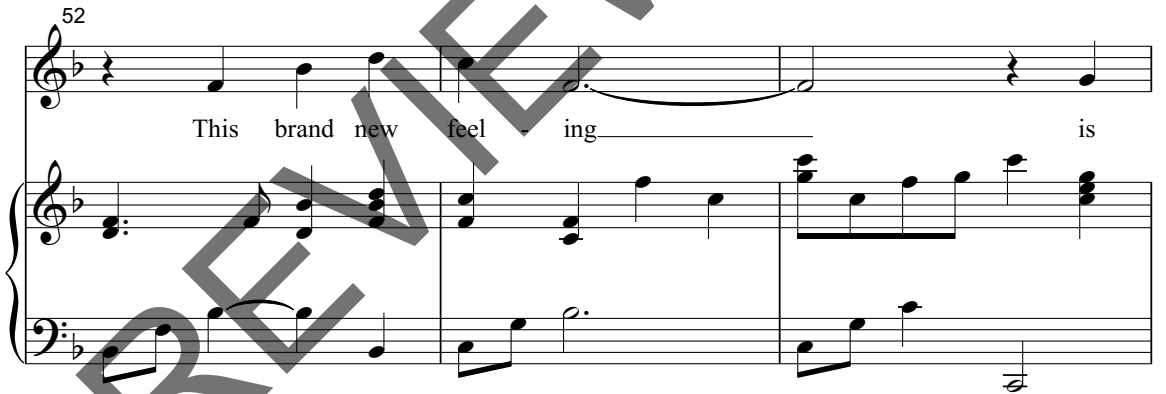
49

ev - 'ry friend, this feel-ing we're feel - ing does-n't have to end.



52

This brand new feel ing is



55

Christ - mas. Christ- mas!



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In the Bleak Midwinter

What__ can I give him, poor__ as I am?

If I were a shep - herd, I would bring a lamb.

If I were a wise man, I would do my part; yet

what I can, I give him: give_____ my

heart._____

From: *Room for Christmas* (CGC61).

Text: Christina G. Rossetti, 1830-1894.

Music: *CRANHAM*, Gustav Holst, 1874-1939.

Arranged by Mark Burrows.

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